Dear [Patient Name],

Our records indicate that you or members of your family are insured by Anthem BlueCross BlueShield (Anthem). If this is accurate, it’s important for you to be aware of significant developments that may impact the in-network access that you may have as an Anthem member to health services at Augusta Health. The status of our negotiation with Anthem BlueCross BlueShield (Anthem) for a new contract is one such development, and I’m writing you today to share important information about where we stand.

Like all healthcare providers, Augusta Health contracts with insurers to provide care to their insured members. Fair contracts with insurers are critical in our ability to fulfill our mission. They enable us to provide clinical expertise and keep essential health care services in the community. Without them, we cannot deliver high quality care to the patients who count on us.

Despite our best efforts, we have not reached an agreement after months of good faith negotiations and now it is necessary for us to follow the appropriate steps in order to reach a compromise before the contract ends.

**What this means for you:**

1. **For now,** **nothing changes for you and all other patients insured with Anthem between now and the end of the year** when our current contract expires.
2. **Augusta Health’s current contract with Anthem** **expires on December 31** of this year and we remain willing to talk with Anthem to find a solution.
3. **Anthem pays Augusta Health and our employed physicians significantly less** than other area health systems. Augusta Health provides the same or better healthcare services.
4. **Receiving competitive reimbursement from insurance carriers is critical** for Augusta Health’s mission and long-term financial viability.
5. **We are the primary healthcare provider within 30 miles** and further for many patients, so it’s vital for you and all our patients to have in-network access to our services.
6. **We are fighting for Anthem members** to have access to local high quality, low-cost healthcare, as they’ve always had from Augusta Health.
7. **The Emergency Room will always be open for you,** regardless of the how the Anthem/AH negotiations turn out.

Over the past 25 years, Augusta Health has carefully managed costs, while investing in top clinical talent, technology, and new capabilities. As a result, our costs are lower than those of our competitors in the region, while we have built a health system that consistently delivers high quality care for Augusta County and the surrounding communities.

Our effort has earned us one of the highest accolades for healthcare providers, the “America’s Best 50 Hospitals” award, for the last three years. Our patients should have access to Augusta Health’s services and should not have to drive long distances for high-quality care.

**We cannot continue to cut costs while also absorbing Anthem’s below-market rates for years to come. It simply is not sustainable.**

We notified Anthem, as we are required to do under our contract, of our intent to reach a new agreement before our existing contract expires. We have three months before our current contract ends, which is enough time to reach an agreement. We believe there is room for both parties to come together and find compromise. We are looking to be reimbursed at rates in keeping with other providers in the region – nothing more, nothing less. We are committed to working in good faith with Anthem to find it. It’s what our patients deserve.

I appreciate the time you’ve taken to better understand the important issue we face. If your health benefits are provided through your employer, I encourage you to share the information in this letter with your supervisor or your Human Resources department. If you have questions, Augusta Health has set up a web page to provide answers to Frequently Asked Questions and a contact email address and phone number for specific questions. Patients and members can visit this site at [**www.AugustaHealth.com/Anthem**](http://www.AugustaHealth.com/Anthem) or call **(540) 332-5444**. Concerned Anthem members may also contact Anthem Member Services at the number on the back of their ID cards to express their opinion that Anthem should engage in meaningful discussions to keep Augusta Health in-network.

Thank you for trusting Augusta Health with your care.

Sincerely,

Mary N. Mannix, FACHE

CEO and President

Augusta Health